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REMARK

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's acknowledgement of Applicants' 35 U.S.C. § 119 priority claim. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner further acknowledge the receipt of the priority documents.

Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the Examiner's finding that claim 11 contains allowable subject matter. Applicants cancel claim 11 and incorporate its features in claims 1-3.

Pending claims 1-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,226,710 to Melchior. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Melchior describes a technique for applying a content addressable memory ("CAM") engine between a processor and conventional random access memory ("RAM"). The Examiner relied upon description of key and association width configurations, and the storage of such configuration information, as alleged disclosure of the claimed features of the priority ranks and corresponding ancillary storage section. The configuration information referred to by the Examiner in Melchior appears to merely be related to the key and association widths that would affect the number of key words needed to be read and number of possible associations, which would, in turn, affect the performance efficiency of the described CAM engine.

For example, the cited portions of Melchior merely state that "configuration is automatically selected to minimize the number of key words that need to be read for a seek" Col. 12, lines 49-50 of Melchoir. The configuration merely refers to setting a key width and association width configuration. Please see, e.g., col. 12, line 46-48 of Melchior. Therefore, such portions of Melchior do not disclose the claimed "priority ranks."

The Examiner further applied the description of "configuration data for the first few tables are kept in registers" as alleged disclosure of the claimed priority ranks being kept in the

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claimed ancillary storage section. Col. 13, lines 42-46 of Melchior. Applicants respectfully submit that the cited description fails to provide disclosure of the registers themselves being associated with the respective tables.

The Examiner applied the description of an “unload table” command where the CAM engine “beginning with word zero,” sequentially outputs “each RAM word within the range of the configuration” as alleged disclosure of the claimed outputting. Col. 16, lines 16-20 of Melchior. (Emphasis added) Applicants respectfully submit that such portions of Melchior merely describe outputting RAM words within the range of configuration, and, therefore, do not disclose outputting according in descending order of priority ranks, as claimed. Such portions also merely describe an “unload table” command, and, therefore, fail to disclose the claimed condition for outputting—namely, “when at least one of the storage areas stores therein information matching with a word supplied from an exterior.”

Furthermore, the cited portions of Melchior do not appear to describe using the configuration information to prioritize, in any way, CAM storage areas such that pointers to such areas would be outputted in an order that corresponds to such a prioritization.

Therefore, Melchior, as cited and relied upon by the Examiner, fails to disclose,

“[a] content-addressable memory comprising:

a storage section having a plurality of storage areas for storing therein a plurality of pieces of information, the storage areas having respective priority ranks assigned thereto;

an ancillary storage section having a plurality of ancillary storage areas for storing therein the priority ranks, the plurality of ancillary storage areas being associated with the plurality of storage areas, respectively; and

a controlling section for outputting, when at least one of the storage areas stores therein information matching with a word supplied from an exterior, pointer(s) of all or part of the at least one of the storage areas in descending order of priority ranks that

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are stored in ancillary storage area(s) associated with the at least one of the storage areas," as recited in claim 1. (Emphasis added)

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1, together with claims 2-14 dependent therefrom, is patentable over Melchior for at least the above-stated reasons.

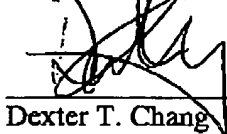
The above statements on the disclosure in the cited reference represent the present opinions of the undersigned attorney. The Examiner is respectfully requested to specifically indicate those portions of the reference that provide the basis for a view contrary to any of the above-stated opinions.

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's implicit finding that the additional reference made of record, but not applied, does not render the claims of the present application unpatentable, whether this reference is considered alone or in combination with others.

In view of the remarks set forth above, this application is in condition for allowance which action is respectfully requested. However, if for any reason the Examiner should consider this application not to be in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned attorney at the number listed below prior to issuing a further Action.

Any fee due with this paper, not fully covered by an enclosed check, may be charged on Deposit Account 50-1290.

Respectfully submitted,



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